

Washington Update from David Turch and Associates

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*David Turch and Associates***WASHINGTON UPDATE****JUNE 24, 2016**

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FAA REAUTHORIZATION

The House and Senate are at loggerheads on how best to proceed with the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) legislation. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster is keen on passing a short-term extension by the July 15 deadline. Chairman Shuster is pushing the privatization of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system and may be gambling that he will have a stronger hand to play if Congress punts the FAA bill until earlier next year. The Senate, on the other hand, favors passing a reauthorization bill through the end of the next fiscal year (September 30, 2017).

While the details of a deal are still unclear, Chairman Shuster has been adamant in his opposition to voting on the Senate passed reauthorization bill. An open question is whether the FAA extension will be clean (containing no new major policy guidelines) or whether it will carry programmatic changes endorsed by the Senate, such as enhanced transportation security measures. This tug-of-war is likely to continue to play out through the July 4 congressional recess with staff from the respective committees of jurisdiction continuing to work on an agreement. Time is essentially running out for Congress to reach a deal on the FAA bill. The Senate is expected to be in session for 12 days and the House is scheduled to be in session for just nine days before they adjourn for the presidential conventions and the August recess.

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION MISSES ITS MARK

The Senate debated and defeated four separate amendments on gun control this week. Democratic Senators Chris Murphy and Dianne Feinstein each introduced amendments to the FY 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. Senator Chris Murphy (CT) offered an amendment requiring background checks at gun shows and for online transactions. Senator Dianne Feinstein (CA) sponsored an amendment prohibiting the conveyance of firearms to individuals on the terror watch list (the no fly/no buy proposal). The Republican alternatives included Senator John Cornyn's (TX) SHIELD amendment and Senator Chuck Grassley's (IA) amendment to block the Department of Veterans Affairs from using funds to report veterans to the National Instant Background Check System unless a court has determined that they are a danger to themselves or others. Senator Cornyn's SHIELD amendment

would have altered Feinstein's initiative by requiring probable cause before blocking an individual from buying a firearm. The votes, as expected, were mostly split along party lines.

GOP Main Senator Susan Collins is promoting a compromise to Feinstein and Cornyn's proposals. Senator Collins' measure would prevent individuals on the no fly and selectee lists (a more restrictive list covering roughly 100,000 people instead of the one million people under Feinstein measure) from purchasing firearms. Collins' measure would block certain US residents and foreigners from buying guns at gun stores with an exemption for gun shows. A test vote on the proposal fell eight votes short of the 60 votes necessary for cloture, but an official vote has not yet been scheduled. A companion bill to Senator Collin's proposal will be introduced in the House following an unprecedented sit-in on the House floor by Democrats on Wednesday and Thursday. While the Democratic sit-in was intended to serve as a means of forcing House action on gun control legislation, it may have ended in further poisoning the political environment in the House, dooming any prospects of passing appropriations bills through regular order.

HOUSE PASSES ZIKA FUNDING

The House passed funding for the anti-Zika virus fight. House Republicans appropriated \$1.1 billion for the initiative. Senate Democrats oppose the measure and President Obama has threatened to veto the proposal as inadequate. If House and Senate members cannot find common ground on this issue by July 15, the American people will have to wait at least until September, following the August recess, before the funding issue can be addressed. Cases of birth defects have already been reported in the United States by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leading to heightened concerns within the medical community that a Zika outbreak could occur this summer at the height of the mosquito season.

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